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THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF MICRONESIA

PAUL RAINBIRD

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The Archaeology of Micronesia

This is the first book-length archaeological study of Micronesia, an island group in the western Pacific Ocean. Drawing on a wide range of archaeological, anthropological and historical sources, the author explores the various ways that the societies of these islands have been interpreted since European navigators first arrived there in the sixteenth century. Considering the process of initial colonization on the island groups of Marianas, Carolines, Marshalls and Kiribati, he examines the histories of these islands and explores how the neighbouring areas are drawn together through notions of fusion, fluidity and flux. The author places this region within the broader arena of Pacific island studies and addresses contemporary debates such as origins, processes of colonization, social organization, environmental change and the interpretation of material culture. This book will be essential reading for any scholar with an interest in the archaeology of the Pacific.

PAUL RAINBIRD is a Lecturer in Archaeology, Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Wales, Lampeter. He has conducted archaeological fieldwork in the Pacific islands, Australia and Europe. He co-edited *Interrogating Pedagogies: Archaeology in Higher Education* (2001).

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521651882

First published in print format 2004

ISBN-13 978-0-511-21089-1 eBook (Adobe Reader)
ISBN-10 0-511-20729-8 eBook (Adobe Reader)

ISBN-13 978-0-521-65188-2 hardback
ISBN-10 0-521-65188-3 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-65630-6 paperback
ISBN-10 0-521-65630-3 paperback

Dedicated to the memory of my father,
Ronald Gregory Rainbird (1931–2003),
always a seafarer at heart

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It feels as though this book has been a very long time in the making. My first trip to the region was in 1991 as part of a team working in contract archaeology and it was that experience, and discussion with John Craib, Peter White and Roland Fletcher at the University of Sydney, which led me to propose PhD research conducted between 1992 and 1995. Of course, I have continued to maintain my research interests in the region, and although I returned to Europe from Australia in 1997 I have found a new set of colleagues who have been energetic enough to organize colloquia and create a stimulating community through the European Colloquium on Micronesia and for that I thank Beatriz Moral and Anne Di Piazza.

My training in European archaeology, as an undergraduate at the University of Sheffield, has guided my research and interpretations, I think, in many ways not typical for the part of the world under discussion in this volume. As such, although I hope it provides a coherent and comprehensive account of the archaeology of the region, in its interpretative stance my intention is to provide a fresh understanding of the material evidence.

There are so many individuals and organizations that I have benefited from over the period of the preparation of this book that it is impossible to name them all here. Many I have acknowledged in previous publications, and I thank them again, but others have directly aided the production of the current volume. For reading and commenting on parts or all of the text I'd like to thank Atholl Anderson, Chris Ballard, John Craib, Sarah Daligan, Chris Gosden, Kate Howell, Anne Di Piazza, Miranda Richardson, Jim Specht, Matthew Spriggs, Peter White, Steve Wickler and Norman Yoffee. For answering questions and providing information I would like to thank Sophie Bickford, Paul D'Arcy, Roger Green, Scott Russell, Serge Tcherkézoff and the National Library of Australia.

I am very pleased to acknowledge a Research Leave Grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Board, which allowed me an extended period of time to complete this work as a Visiting Fellow in the Centre for Archaeological Research based in the Division of Archaeology and Natural History, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University. My Fellowship there provided an unparalleled environment for research and writing and I thank Professors Atholl Anderson and Geoff Hope for their hospitality.

My current and former colleagues in the Department of Archaeology, University of Wales, Lampeter have over many years provided a stimulating working environment where the range of expertise and geographical interests can only have served to keep critical thought alive, and I thank them.

A big debt of thanks is owed to Meredith 'Mem' Wilson, a stalwart friend, who is not afraid to ask difficult questions of me. Finally, I would like to thank Sarah and my family for their love, support and encouragement during the difficult times in which this book was completed.

CHAPTER I

MICRONESIAN/MACROFUSION

The story of Micronesia is one of fluidity and fusion. It is fluid in the basic sense of the sea as salt water, a body of fluid that allows for the passage of seacraft across what in the terms of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri (1988) we might understand as smooth space. The ocean is a space not striated by walls or fences as boundaries, but one where all the known world is the place of home; where nomads exist is large space from which they do not travel. We should be aware of the metaphorical use of some of these terms, the sea is not always smooth, but it is a space for movement, and the inhabitants of Micronesia are not regarded as nomads in the conventional sense, but their world has often been a large one allowing movement by judicious use of winds and currents that would often mean extended stays on islands that were not their homes: but, they were at home with the sea.

As salt and water fuse in the fluid of the ocean, so it is that I understand the story of Micronesia as one of fusion. As a concept in the study of human societies past and present, fusion allows us to think beyond boundaries, both of the body and of space. In regard to the body, if we accept fusion we can accept there is no expectation of finding pure types of people, no expectation that contacts between people from different places and with different histories produce hybrid forms, because each party in the process is already a fusion derived from meetings that occurred long before the several millennia that are the concern of this book. Fusion has the ability to allow us to think through intra- and inter-regional connections and is a concept that might stand as the motif for Micronesia and Micronesian studies. Whereas individual island worlds have often been invoked as microcosms of the Earth, perhaps best observed in the title of Paul Bahn and John Flenley's (1992) popular book *Easter Island, Earth Island* (see also Kirch 1997a; cf. Rainbird 2002a), in being sealed and localized eco-systems in which the humans are included, which is an extension of island biogeography and the now discredited concept of 'islands as laboratories' (cf. Rainbird 1999c). The connecting sea that ebbs and flows between the islands of Micronesia is also a connecting sea that pays little heed to supposed boundaries. Any boundaries that exist are social ones, and are of no less importance as a consequence, but have to be historically situated rather than assumed. Consequentially, with the seascapes of the Pacific Ocean in mind, it might be

useful to look beyond the conventional boundary of the region under discussion here.

The following passage comes from the work of American ethnographer Fay-Cooper Cole in *The Wild Tribes of Davao District, Mindanao* and is derived from work conducted early last century:

Another possible source of outside blood is suggested by well verified stories of castaways on the east coast of Mindanao and adjacent islands. While working with the Mandaya in the region of Mayo Bay the writer was frequently told that three times, in the memory of the present inhabitants, strange boats filled with strange people had been driven to their coasts by storms. The informants insisted that these newcomers were not put to death but that such of them as survived were taken into the tribe. These stories are given strong substantiation by the fact that only a few months prior to my visit a boat load of people from the Carolines was driven to the shores of Mayo Bay and that their boat, as well as one survivor, was then at the village of Mati. I am indebted to Mr. Henry Hubbel for the following explicit account of these castaways: 'One native banca [single outrigger boat] of castaways arrived at Lucatan, N.E. corner of Mayo Bay, Mindinao, on January 2nd, 1909. The banca left the island of Ulithi for the island of Yap, two days' journey, on December 10th, 1908. They were blown out of their course and never sighted land until January 2nd, twenty-two days after setting sail. There were nine persons aboard, six men, two boys, and one woman, all natives of Yap except one man who was a Visayan from Capiz, Panay, P. I., who settled on the island of Yap in 1889. These people were nineteen days without food and water except what water could be caught during rainstorms. The Visayan, Victor Valenamo, died soon after his arrival, as a result of starvation. The natives recovered at once and all traces of their starvation disappeared within two weeks. The men were powerfully built, nearly six feet high. Their bodies were all covered with tattoo work. The woman was decorated even more than the men. (Cole 1913: 170–1).

Mindanao is one of the larger and most southerly of the Philippine Islands archipelago, a group of large Southeast Asian islands that has at no time been considered part of Micronesia. But to quote the report above is to highlight the fluidity of the boundaries and thus the difficulties inherent in such a project of labelling and identifying the region of Micronesia. Certainly in current geographical toponyms, the ocean expanse that forms the western seascape of the Mariana and Caroline Islands is the Philippine Sea. Part of this sea, with a greater area provided by a section of the Pacific Ocean, constitutes the 7 million square kilometres of area conventionally labelled Micronesia. Within this seascape there is 2700 square kilometres of land. Micronesia epitomizes what Epeli Hau'ofa (1993) has termed, in his highly influential essay, 'a sea of islands'. One sea connecting a multitude of islands both within and, as we have already seen, beyond conventional boundaries. The Philippines to the west of the study area (Fig. 1.1) have been the location for such stories of contact since the earliest reports by European visitors. As historian of Micronesia Fran Hezel (1983: 36–7) writes from the primary sources:

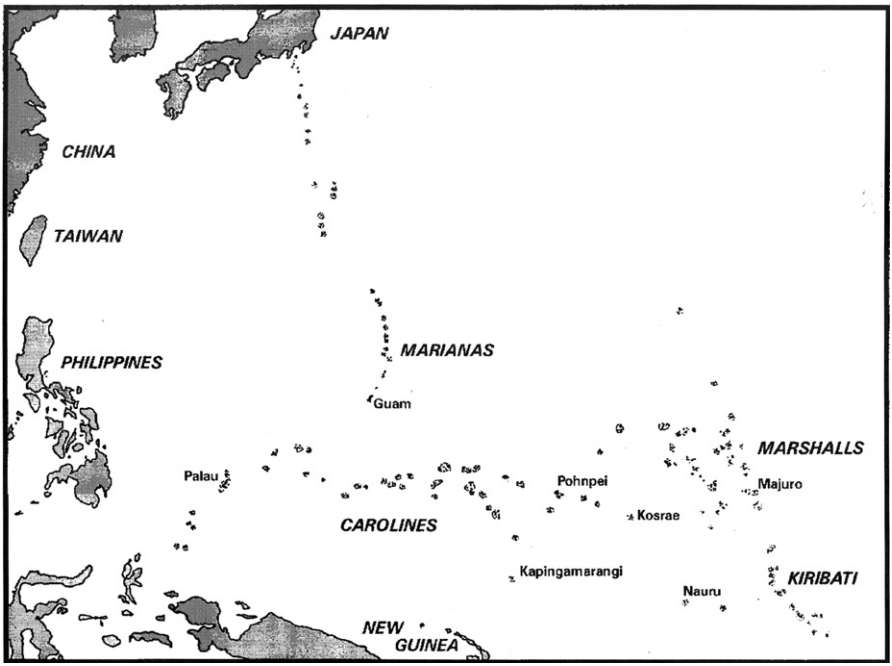

Fig. 1.1 Map of Micronesia. The current popular understanding is that Micronesia incorporates the island groups of the Marianas, Carolines and Marshalls, and the Gilberts in the Republic of Kiribati. A small number of other islands that fall outside of these main groups are also included.

One day in late December 1696, two strange-looking canoes appeared off the eastern coast of Samar, an island in the eastern Philippines . . . The villagers of Samar responded promptly and generously to the plight of the castaways. They brought coconuts, palm wine, and taro, all of which were greedily devoured by the strangers who . . . had been adrift for over two months. The villagers hurriedly summoned two women, who had themselves drifted to Samar some time before, in the hope that they would be able to communicate with the strangers. At the sight of one of these women, several of the castaways, who recognized her as a relative, burst into tears. By the time the parish priest arrived at the spot, communication between the Filipinos and the band of Carolinians was well under way, with the two women serving as interpreters.

Hezel continues that the 'castaways' were able, by placing pebbles on the beach, to tell of eighty-seven islands that they had visited, and provided the names and sailing times between them. They also had with them when they landed a piece of iron and were very keen to collect some more.

This second account, more than 200 years prior to the first is, at least in its secondary reporting, apparently consistent in interpreting these 'strange' people on 'strange' boats arriving by accident through drifting from their prescribed

course; the group arriving at Samar was supposed to have been sailing between Lamotrek and Fais in the Caroline Islands. But each of the groups had elements that were exotic to the Carolines (one had in their party a Filipino man, the other had a piece of iron), both crossing and re-crossing parameters of regional definition.

A third and final example from the Philippines is quite different from those reported above and is derived from the report of Fedor Jagor; whilst travelling through the Philippines in 1859, he states (Jagor 1875, quoted in Lessa 1962: 334):

> In Guiuan [Guinan] I was visited by some Mikronesians [*sic*], who for the last fourteen days had been engaged at Sulangan on the small neck of land south-east from Guiuan, in diving for pearl mussels (mother-of-pearl), having undertaken the dangerous journey for the express purpose.

William Lessa (1962) in collecting this information has no problem with its reliability and accepts that the shell collectors were from Woleai in the Caroline Islands. And, indeed, why should we have a problem with accepting that Caroline Islanders were able to make many round trips of over 1000 kilometres each way in locally built outrigger vessels for the express purpose of collecting a resource not available nearby? Other resources to exploit might have included iron, but the Caroline Islanders, like the communities of the other Micronesian island groups, were users of shell over all other raw materials for portable tools until the general availability of iron, for most places not beginning until the twentieth century. Specific shell types would be intimately known, and the variety of colour, pattern and physical properties would be recognized by the majority of the community. Certainly, beyond apparently functional items, such as adzes and fishing lures, shell beads and whole half-bivalves were often valued as a type of money, strung together; and as I will discuss in detail in chapter 6, they often formed part of the cargo in inter-island exchange. But as we will see in chapter 7, in regard to the widespread distribution of particular adze types, fishing lures manufactured for trolling behind sailing craft can also have need of special raw materials that require contacts over large swathes of seascape. Robert Gillett (1987), in his study of tuna fishing on Satawal in the central Caroline Islands, found that pearl shell for fashioning lures was imported both from Chuuk Lagoon, which produced shell particularly prized for its rainbow-like colouring, and from much further asea in New Guinea, once again, like the Philippines, well beyond the supposed bounds of Micronesia.

The historical accounts, which I will review further in detail below, when read in relation to the later accounts of scientists and ethnographers, provide an understanding of the islands of Micronesia as situated within a seascape; although we should be wary of relative terms such as 'strangeness' or 'dangerous' that are used, as in some of the passages reviewed above, in outsider accounts of voyaging and encounter. Seascapes are knowable places, in the same way that landscapes have to be understood also as visionscapes, soundscapes,

touchscapes, smellscapes (Tilley 1999) and even tastescapes. A person approaching the sea from the land in a strong onshore breeze can attest to the taste of bitter salt that is driven by the wind into the mouth and drying the throat. Seascapes are further nuanced and utterly knowable places for those that exist in them on a quotidian basis. Modern ethnography allied to historical reports provides an abundance of information that, through senses, lore, observation, technology, skill, mythology and myriad other ways, the ocean of the Micronesians was, and in some cases still is, an utterly knowable place in its form and texture and its link with the guiding heavens connecting the strange place that is always beyond the knowable world, the horizon, where spirits of below meet the spirits of above (Goodenough 1986). This is a seascape traversed by known seaways; a place of paths that linked communities.

Like landscapes, seascapes are not without their dangers and the large amount of recorded ritual relating to seafaring in the Micronesian sea of islands is as much to do with safe return as with successful, in an economic sense, trading or fishing expeditions. Journeys were taken when it was perceived safe to do so. They were not merely a necessity for the collection and exchange of mundane goods, but were instead part and parcel of communities who did not always perceive their boundaries as being at the edge of the reef, although at times, as we shall see in relation to the people of Pohnpei (chapter 7), they may have found it unnecessary to travel as people came to them. At other times, for example when the Spanish settled Guam in the late seventeenth century, islanders broke off the connections that had existed along well-traversed seaways.

Although occurring 250 years after the first European encounters with the people in the region now known as Micronesia, the voyages of Captain James Cook are often assumed to be the major turning point in Pacific history, the one that led to the colonial era which lasted up until the post-Second World War period (Rainbird 2001b). Scholarship concerning the Cook voyages has given apparent precedence to the map that was created from the information provided by the Raiatean navigator-priest Tupaia during the Second Voyage's visit to Tahiti as reported by Johann Forster (1996). Tupaia named eighty-four islands of which Tahiti was at the centre. The actual identity of these islands has been argued over ever since (see discussion in Lewis 1994), but for Forster it was simple to conclude that:

> The foregoing account of the many islands mentioned by Tupaya [Tupaia] is sufficient to prove that the inhabitants of the islands in the South Seas have made very considerable navigations in their slight and weak canoes; navigations which many Europeans would think impossible to be performed, upon a careful view of the vessels themselves, their riggings, sails, &c. &c. also the provisions of the climate.

Unlike the potentially doubting Europeans, Forster had first-hand experience of the similarities of language and physical type of the people encountered on the second of Cook's first two voyages, which incorporated the two southerly

angles of what later would become known as the Polynesian Triangle. The expeditions visited Aotearoa/New Zealand and Rapa Nui/Easter Island and the islands of the Equatorial zone of Tahiti and the Society Islands, the Marquesas in the east and the 'Friendly Islands' of Tonga in the west. The importance for Pacific scholarship that has been placed on this account and the chart that was prepared for Forster is quite different from the little-commented-upon chart constructed by Father Paul Klein of the eighty-seven islands identified by the Carolinian 'castaways' on Samar in 1696. Why are these received differently? The Spanish certainly appear to have become excited in regard to the prospect of many more souls to be saved on these previously unknown islands and an official inquiry found evidence of earlier 'castaway' groups that show, 'if the reports are to believed, the traffic between the Palaos [as the Carolines were then known] and the Philippines was heavy. In the year 1664 alone, as many as thirty canoes reportedly drifted to the Philippines' (Hezel 1983: 40).

Klein's chart was reproduced many times, but as a measure of indigenous interaction prior to prolonged European contact with the region it has held little sway compared with the chart derived from the Cook voyage. Perhaps this reflects the fact that the area was generally a Spanish colonial concern until the nineteenth century. Even as late as the 1920s the anthropologist James Frazer (1924: 27) was able to say of Micronesia that 'on the whole this great archipelago has been more neglected [in scholarship] and is less known than any other in the Pacific'.

Another concern may have been the difficulty in grouping together these peoples who clearly were aware of each other's presence, and travelled beyond the putative region of Micronesia, but who also had distinctive differences in material expression and linguistics. Such problems are perhaps suggested in the musings of the French 'scientists' Grégoire Louis Domeny de Rienzi and Jules-Sébastien-César Dumont d'Urville. Although Dumont d'Urville is regarded as the founder of the boundaries of the division of the Pacific into three areas, or four if one includes the islands of South-East Asia and the appellation Malaysia, he had great arguments with his contemporary Domeny de Rienzi (see 1837). It was Domeny de Rienzi who coined the term Micronesia, a year ahead of Dumont d'Urville's tripartite division that used the term Melanesia for the first time, and was published in 1832.

Nicholas Thomas (1989; 1997) has highlighted the racist distinctions made in these divisions of the Pacific, at least in relation to Melanesia and Polynesia. Micronesia fits less comfortably into such arguments and this is probably due, at least in part, to what Serge Tcherkézoff (2001) has identified as a continuation of a fifteenth-century dualism separating dark skin/fair skin people. This has been identified as continuing today in Pacific scholarship (Terrell, Kelly and Rainbird 2001), but can be seen in other works such as Forster's significant work already mentioned above. In this, Forster links those people he had encountered in Polynesia as related to the Caroline Islanders and thus concludes

that the Polynesians (although I use this term anachronistically in this case) were descendants of the Carolinians and quite distinct from the 'black' people that he had encountered in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) and New Caledonia. Both the latter groups are today conventionally understood as part of Melanesia, that is, the 'Black islands'. Forster (1996 [1778]: 341) states in relation to the forming of the two distinct types of Pacific people that:

both would afterwards in the new climate preserve in some measure the hue and complexion they brought from the country which they left last: upon these premises we ventured to suppose that the two races of men in the South Sea arrived there by different routs [*sic*], and were descended from two different sets of men. [T]he five nations of [Tahiti/Society Islands, New Zealand/Aotearoa, Easter Island/Rapa Nui, Tonga, and the Marquesas] seem to come from Northward and by the Caroline-islands, Ladrones [Marianas], the Manilla [Philippines] and the island of Borneo, to have descended from the Malays: whereas on the contrary, the black race of men seems to have sprung from the people that originally inhabited the Moluccas, and on the approach of the Malay tribes withdrew into the interior parts of their isles and countries.

Forster was writing only a few decades prior to the advent of racial science that from the beginning of the nineteenth century attempted to systematize the attributes relating to the concept of divisions of people by race, and which eventually became linked to theories of social evolution through biology and social Darwinism (see, e.g., Stepan 1982). The intellectual milieu of Western discourse at this time was one in which the fusion of people from different places, evident in the population of Micronesia, provided a stumbling block in attempts to provide a definition of an actual Micronesian 'type' or 'race' as was desired. Consider these attempts for example:

We sometimes speak of the numerous colonies which have proceeded from Great Britain as being one people, inasmuch as they have issued from a single source; and in this sense we may apply the term to the tribes of Polynesia. We also speak of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire – at least after two or three centuries of conquest – as forming one people, inasmuch as the various nations and tribes to which they belonged had been cemented and fused together, by the general ascendancy and intermixture of one dominant race, – and in this sense alone the term is applicable to the natives of the Micronesian islands. Hence it will be seen that no general description can be given of the latter, which shall be every where equally correct, and which will not require many allowances and exceptions.

The Micronesians, as a people, do not differ greatly in complexion from their neighbours of Polynesia. Their colour varies from a light yellow, in some of the groups, particularly the western, to a reddish brown, which we find more common in the east and south-east. The features are usually high and bold, – the nose straight or aquiline, the cheek-bones projecting, the chin rounded and prominent. The nose is commonly widened at the lower part, as in the Polynesian race, but this is not a universal trait. The hair, which is black, is in some straight, in others curly. The beard is usually scanty, though among

the darker tribes it is more abundant, and these have often whiskers and mustachios. In stature, the natives most often fall below than exceed the middle height, and they are naturally slender. (Hale 1968 [1846]: 71)

[For the Gilbertese] [p]roofs are abundant that the inhabitants of these islands belong to the same race as those of the Hawaiian, Marquesan, Tahitian and Samoan Islands. In appearance, they most strikingly resemble Hawaiians. There is evidently a mixture of people coming from different parts of Polynesia. Some strikingly resemble the Samoans, or Navigator Islanders. Not only does their appearance, cast of countenance, form of body, color of hair, eyes, teeth, and other characteristics indicate their origin to be the same, but also their language and many of their customs and practices. (Damon 1861: 6–7)

[The Carolines population is] an odd medley of the black, brown, and yellow races. It is a curious fact that, although Yap lies some 1500 miles nearer India and the Malay archipelago than Ponape [Pohnpei], the westernmost islands are much the darker and their language the more strange and barbarous. The great stream of Polynesian migration has passed further southward. Yet the dialect of Ulithi to the north of Yap, like that of the central Carolines, has a considerable Polynesian infiltration. These jagged or indented areas of speech are a peculiar puzzle to the philologist, showing a very irregular distribution of race-mixture. (Christian 1899a: 105)

It will be understood from their geographical position that mixture of races is inevitable in these islands. For instance, two different types may be distinguished in the natives of Truk [Chuuk]. On Yap and Palau, we notice that some of the natives have frizzy hair. We may possibly regard these facts as testifying to the mixture of races. (Matsumura 1918: 12–13)

All of these authors were writing on the basis of some direct experience of travelling and observing Micronesians first hand, but they all also relied on the writings of others for comparisons with places they had not visited, and the biases exhibited are not only their own but represent a long-established tradition of grouping and labelling people on the basis of similarity and difference. Of these authors only Horatio Hale and Akira Matsumura may be considered ethnographers proper of their quite different times, but the missionary Reverend Samuel Damon and the traveller F.W. Christian both adopt the common language for biological ascription prevalent at the time. In all cases, however, the complexity of the situations that they encountered did not allow for simple labelling.

The comment of Damon regarding the Gilbert Islanders (the I-Kiribati of the present Republic of Kiribati) having close affinities with Hawaiians is perhaps illustrative of a phenomenon exhibited by many travellers in their attempts to describe people and perhaps ought to be taken as a warning to the unwary. Damon was the pastor of the Bethel Church in Hawaii and had never previously visited Micronesia. The account of his trip on the missionary ship the *Morning Star* from which the quotation is taken makes it clear that the people of the Gilbert Islands were the first he made acquaintance with in Micronesia.

Thus, given his knowledge of Hawaii and Hawaiians, he is best able to make comparisons between these two groups. This is important, as the itinerary of voyaging requires consideration when assessing the various claims of people in describing the inhabitants of individual islands because it is likely that the comparison, although not always made explicit, will be with the people of the island previously visited. It has been argued in relation to this that the black/fair race divide of the South Sea made by Forster was particularly strong as the Melanesian New Hebrides (Vanuatu) was encountered by him for the first time directly after a stay in Tahiti (Jolly 1992; Douglas 1999).

Christian's reliance on linguistic variation as an indicator of complexity within the region is a continuation of a link between philology and race beginning in the eighteenth century with the discovery of the Indo-European family of languages (Ashcroft 2001). In our current understanding this would mean at least seven non-mutually intelligible language or dialect groupings in the region at the time of Magellan. Even within these there could be some difficulty in communication between different island communities, and within individual island communities there were also rank-accessed special ritual languages such as the *itang* of Chuuk. At another level however there are two main subgroupings (see Fig. 1.2) of the language family of Austronesian which covers the whole region. Thus, language could be used to separate or encompass at a variety of levels and with as much success in reality as physical characteristics. Of course, other languages such as Spanish, Tagalog, Japanese, German, English and American English all have had, or still do have, a presence in the islands, starting from at least the sixteenth century onwards according to historical reports. In the same way that today English has been incorporated as a second language, one of colonial government, while the local language has been maintained in many cases for the home and 'traditional' politics, neighbouring languages of the communities that were in regular contact with each other could also be learnt. 'Scientists' attempting to record the essential elements of a society rarely commented upon such occurrences, and this neglect in recording may also in part be a further consequence of treating individual islands as laboratories.

Fusion and fluidity do not in essence or as a consequence indicate sameness. In considering the contemporary consequences of globalization through multinational corporations and the forging of greater alliances between nation-states, many commentators have found that rather than the feared consequences realized in homogenization and the consequent single 'global village', such broader groupings have allowed different community identities to emerge as they imagine themselves differently when released from the confining dictates and boundaries of the nation-state (Bauman 1998; cf. Anderson 1991). It is possible, I believe, to envisage the history of Micronesia in a similar way, where social boundaries are maintained within a milieu of communication and contact across seaways and across putative language groupings.

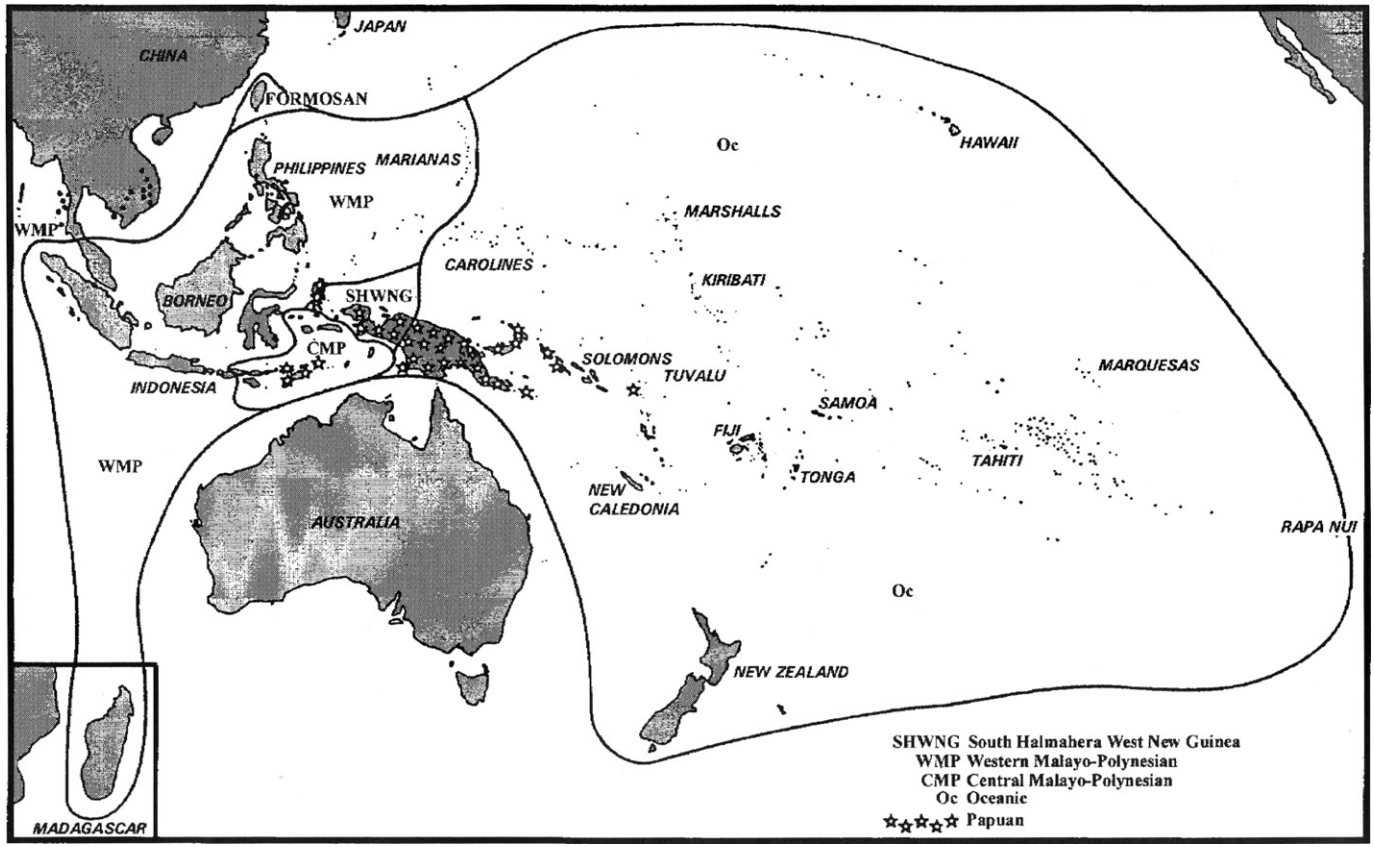

Fig. 1.2 The geographic range and high-order sub-groups of the Austronesian language group (after Tryon 1995). The solid lines indicating certain distributions should not be confused with the definite boundaries of nation-states or supposed 'culture groups'.

It is perhaps possible to identify such an issue from a local perspective by considering anthropologist Glenn Petersen's analysis in his monograph *Lost in the Weeds: Theme and Variation in Pohnpei Political Mythology*. Although Petersen's (1990a: 3) volume finds its title from a Pohnpeian saying that when trying to sort out the evidence of multiple versions derived from oral history 'the truth is *Nan tehlik* "Lost in the weeds" like a coconut that has fallen into the underbrush at the foot of a tree', he does find some consistency in some themes derived from local Pohnpeian history. One consistent aspect amongst the variety of stories related to the initial discovery, construction and settlement of Pohnpei is the continuing introduction of people and things from the outside. This theme of foreign introduction and incorporation is not without a certain ambivalence, but Petersen (1990a: 12) finds that '[t]he emphasis given by these early tales to Pohnpei's reliance on the outer world resonates in modern Pohnpei. The people see interaction with the rest of the world as fundamental to their own existence.'

Interaction with the outer world may indeed be fundamental to the people of Pohnpei in the past and present. In this Pohnpei is not alone, for all the other communities in Micronesia have similarly looked beyond their reefs. But the Pohnpeians, according to Petersen, jealously maintain the ability to control this interaction and may even go so far as to make the island 'invisible – hidden in a great mass of clouds – to anyone sailing past it on the open seas' (1990a: 12).

This theme of interaction allows the possibility of making sense of local understandings of a rock-art site on Pohnpei (Rainbird in press). In my work with Meredith Wilson (Rainbird and Wilson 1999) we found that along with ghosts and indigenous ancestors from mythical times, in the local understandings the engravings could also be attributed to Spaniards, Filipinos, 'Orientals' or 'Indians'. This provides, I suggest, further confirmation of the observations of Petersen.

Summary of the book

In examining the connectivity and resulting observations of similarities and differences in the material culture of the region and beyond, the motifs of fusion and fluidity, themselves linked, form two of the linking themes of this book. In chapter 2 I examine the intellectual and political milieu of Micronesian studies through a consideration of the historical and anthropological accounts of the region. Chapter 3 takes as its theme the fluid geographical, political and disciplinary boundaries of the area. This includes issues regarding seafaring and linguistics. Together the first three are introductory chapters.

Chapter 4 provides an assessment of the date of human arrivals in the region, and their possible direction of travel. The evidence from physical anthropology and archaeology is assessed in terms of its utility for providing evidence of

origins for the people who first settled the islands of the region. This evidence inevitably leads to a consideration of broader themes of island colonization in the Pacific and critically discusses the issues of interpretation in relation to the evidence from the western Pacific more generally. Also considered are local understandings and the issue of what motivated people to settle the islands in the first place.

In order to provide as detailed an account as possible, in the next four chapters the region is split into island groups, with sections describing, where possible, smaller groups or individual islands. The latter is dependent on the amount of material available from each place, and is in itself a product of the history of archaeological research as discussed above. Chapters 5 to 8 therefore provide accounts of particular parts of the region. Chapter 5 focuses on the Mariana Islands archipelago from human settlement until the arrival of the Spanish. The history of the archipelago as a whole reveals differing connections through time within the region and beyond. Differences unique to the Marianas betray intra-archipelago community traits.

Chapter 6 takes the western end of the east–west chain of the Caroline Islands, along with the atolls of that group, and splits it into smaller areas of study. Each area is discussed in terms of its settlement history, archaeology and, where appropriate, rock-art. As is the case elsewhere in the book, ethnography and history are drawn upon where they appear appropriate as an aid to discussing the material remains. Chapter 7 focuses on the material remains of the high islands of the eastern Carolines.

The atoll island groups of the Marshalls and Gilberts and outlying islands in the region are brought together in chapter 8. Although relatively less is known about these islands, an overview and interpretation are provided, with the areas where evidence is lacking acknowledged.

Finally, chapter 9 draws together the three dominant themes, which are a thread throughout the text. These are fusion, fluidity and what will latterly be introduced as flux. Drawn together, such a synthesis provides a critical overview of the long-term history of the people in this part of Oceania and is further related to debates more commonly associated with other areas of Oceania. These other areas have, until now, often received greater attention from scholars.

CHAPTER 2

MICRONESIANS: THE PEOPLE IN HISTORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Archaeology is about people; it is about constructing an understanding concerning people in the past by using an array of resources. One way of attempting to understand the potential difference between the constructor, that is the archaeologist, and the lives of the past being constructed, is to look to the sources of the recent past, that is, the primary and secondary historical texts reporting encounters between outsiders and the people of the region. These direct texts begin with the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan in the sixteenth century. Another source, and one that has had as its aim the description of the differences of the lives of the people of these islands, is the ethnographic and synthetic texts of anthropologists.

It is less the case for the anthropological works, but still of some concern, that the majority of these texts are not vehicles for a direct hearing of islander voices. Some of the work, such as parts of the ethnohistorical work of David Hanlon, is drawn directly from oral history, and other works discussed in this book by Rufino Mauricio and Vicente Diaz are the work of islander academics. These are certainly the exceptions rather than the rule and we should constantly keep in mind the words of Epeli Hau'ofa, published nearly three decades ago, that '[w]hen [as anthropologists] we produce our articles and monographs and they [the people of the study] or their grandchildren read them, they often cannot see themselves or they see themselves being distorted or misrepresented' (1975: 284).

In this chapter I will review the anthropological and historical sources in relation to the region with two purposes in mind. The first is to provide further contextual information to allow for the building of a more detailed understanding of the region and the second is to develop further the themes of fusion and fluidity introduced in chapter 1.

Anthropology's history

As Marshall Sahlins (1995) has commented, supposed 'first contact' situations result in ambiguities amongst the reports. For example, translations of Pigafetta, the chronicler of Magellan's voyage, say of the Chamorro people of Guam that they indicated by gestures that they had no knowledge of people

existing in the world beyond their own small group of islands (Lévesque 1992). But an account probably dictated by another in the company of Magellan and written in Portuguese states that the Chamorro approached their ship 'without any shyness as if they were good acquaintances' (Lévesque 1992: 249). In the Caroline Islands to the south of Guam, records of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century contacts between Europeans and islanders are sporadic, but none the less informative, with comparisons often made between the Carolinians and the Chamorro people of the Marianas.

There is documentary and cartographic evidence to suggest that Ulithi Atoll was sighted and contact made with the islanders during Diogo da Rocha's voyage in 1525 (Lévesque 1992; Lessa 1966). On a sixteenth-century Portuguese map the atoll is labelled 'momcgua' or 'momegug', which bears some similarity to the main islet name of Mogmog, indicating that a person with local knowledge had supplied this. Indeed, historical source work conducted by anthropologist William Lessa (1975a; also Lévesque 1992) found that a number of sixteenth-century works alluded to the European discovery of Ulithi, and Barros' *Terceira decada da Asia* published in 1563 provided additional detail. In this, Barros provides exact dates indicating not only that da Rocha's expedition had stayed on Ulithi for four months, but also that at least some of the Ulithians may have been familiar with the islands of the Philippines some 600 kilometres west. Familiarity with the Philippines appeared to be indicated by the Ulithian's knowledge of where to find gold when shown it by the Europeans, and the knowledge appears to be linked in Barros' account to the 'large *proas*', sailing vessels, possessed by the islanders. This Portuguese visit of 1525, only four years after Magellan led the Spanish expedition that landed at Guam, appears to be the earliest evidence of contact between Europeans and Caroline Islanders.

The Marshall Islanders had first contact with the Spanish when Alvaro de Saavedra stayed at an atoll (possibly Enewetak or Bikini) for eight days in 1529 (Hezel 1983). The eastern Carolines did not enter the European record for over another half-century, with the island of Pohnpei sighted in 1595 during the second Mendaña expedition. This brief encounter was reported by the expedition's Portuguese pilot, and later leader following Mendaña's death, Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, in the following statement:

> When we reached a latitude of just over 6° N, we sighted an island, apparently about 25 leagues in circumference, thickly wooded and inhabited by many people who resemble those of the Ladrones [Marianas], and whom we saw coming towards us in canoes. (in Lévesque 1993: 26)

Moving back to the western Carolines, the islands of Yap are not first recorded until the seventeenth century. On 15 February 1625 the Dutch Nassau fleet reported the first sighting of Yap thus:

they saw another island, not laid down in the charts, in lat. 9°45′ N the natives of which came out to them in canoes with fruits and other refreshments, but as the ships were sailing at a great rate, they were not able to get on board. The people seemed much like those on Guam, and the island seemed very populous and highly cultivated. (Kerr's translation in Lévesque 1993: 574)

It appears from this quote that the Yapese had perhaps learned from elsewhere the appropriate response for extracting Western largesse: they came prepared with food to trade, even though they had apparently no direct experience of European contact up until this point. Could it be that already, a little over a century since Magellan and nearly two centuries before sustained European contact, the 'first contact' experience for the islanders had significantly changed in that the aliens had become knowable, or at least expected?

Earlier, in 1565, the small Spanish ship *San Lucas*, which had separated from the fleet led by Miguel de Legazpi, entered Chuuk Lagoon as the first recorded European craft. Here, as with the Dutch in Yap, the islanders came out to the ship with food and made gestures that they should follow them ashore. As the ship made for the anchorage as directed by a local pilot, 'the Spaniards noticed with alarm hundreds of canoes full of men armed with lances, clubs, and slings, rapidly bearing down on them' (Hezel 1983: 24). Making a hasty retreat across the lagoon, the crew of the *San Lucas* had two more violent confrontations before leaving the lagoon the next day and sailing westwards. However, on encountering two atolls, similar events occurred resulting in the death of two crew and countless islanders. The voyage through the Marshall and Caroline Islands is described by Hezel (1983: 27) as 'one harrowing escapade after another', but the ship survived to become the first to make the west to east journey back to New Spain (Mexico) from the Philippines, thus establishing the Manila Galleon route.

At the same time, we should try to be aware of the islanders' own frames of reference, which, in the Carolines, may be regarded as fine preparation for such encounters. As Glenn Petersen (2000: 26) explains:

When Europeans arrived on the scene, with their histories of imperial expansion, their technologies of domination, and their lusts for superordination, they did not encounter peoples who were unfamiliar with the possibilities of empire. Rather, they found populations who were not only committed traders but already possessed fairly sophisticated concepts concerning the possibilities of overlordship, well-developed commitments to making use of it, and skills and tactics for resisting it.

Many of the previously visited islands of the Carolines were not encountered again for a number of decades. The Spanish expedition led by Villalobos, which left Mexico in November 1542, visited a number of northern atolls of the Marshalls group before arriving in their westerly passage at the islands identified as Fais, never reportedly encountered previously by Europeans, and Ulithi,

which had been. At both, the islanders confidently used Spanish or Portuguese greetings. A 1698 account of one of these encounters by Father Gaspar de San Augustin, although not to be regarded as a primary source, comments that (in Lévesque 1992: 580):

after a few days of navigation, they sighted a small, but very high, inhabited island, with many coconut palms [probably Fais]. They tried to come to an anchor at it, but they could not . . . When the natives of the island saw this, they went to the ships in a small boat, with six men aboard it, and as they came near they were making signs of friendship and offering fish, coconuts and other fruits. When paying attention to what they were repeatedly uttering, it was recognized that they were saying: '*Matelote buenos días*'. Then, making the sign of the cross with the fingers and kissing it; this caused no end of wonderment, because it was not known how they could have learned that, being as they were so isolated in such a remote region.

The allusions to Christianity may have been wishful thinking on the part of the author, but what is clear from the Villalobos expedition is that the community on Fais, which had had no previous recorded contact with Europeans, appear already to have been remotely affected within the eighteen years since the Portuguese had visited neighbouring Ulithi or the twenty-two years since Magellan had landed on Guam.

Encounters could indeed be fleeting, but on occasions the historical legacy can take on a much greater apparent importance. Such a case is that of Francis Drake and his 'island of thieves'. There is no primary report or journal surviving from the British buccaneer Drake's circumnavigation of the Globe in the *Golden Hind*. But secondary sources written decades after the event reported that several weeks after leaving the coast of New Albion (California) and heading west across the Pacific his first island landfall was an unhappy one. William Lessa (1975b) studied the specifics of this leg of Drake's voyage in detail and it is from this source that the following account is derived.

The geographical location of this landfall of islands on 30 September 1579 is variously reported as between 8 and 9 degrees north of the Equator. At this place, although the crew of the *Golden Hind* did not go ashore, they were becalmed and making little headway when approached by hundreds of 'canoes' each carrying between four and fifteen men. The watercraft were paddled rather than sailed, and were highly polished, with shiny white shells hanging from each prow. The islanders brought with them coconuts, fish, potatoes and fruit. They were apparently naked, with distended earlobes and black teeth, and they appear to have been chewing betel nut. At first there seems to have been brisk trade between the sailors and the islanders, but it is reported that over time this became particularly one-sided, with the islanders becoming more and more reluctant to part with goods for exchange. Eventually the islanders appear to have given up on exchange and resorted to taking anything that they could get their hands on, including a dagger and some knives from the belt of a sailor.

One report says that Drake had them fired upon and twenty of the islanders were killed. After three days the *Golden Hind* finally made headway beyond the islands that Drake decided to label 'The Island of Thieves' in order to warn future visitors.

As Lessa (1975b) reports, there have been many attempts, using the scanty historical documents, to identify the actual location of this island group. Yap, some western Carolinian atolls, and islands in the Philippines have all been suggested, along with Guam and the Marianas which Magellan had already labelled the Ladrones ('Islands of Thieves') in 1521. Lessa's own detailed assessment concludes that the Palau Archipelago is the one in question; this would be the first reported European contact with Palauans. He supports this proposal by assessing in detail the geographical and cultural elements of the historic reports, by assuming some confusion occurring in regard to later contacts on the same voyage in the islands of South-East Asia, and by assessing the behaviour of the islanders in relation to what Lessa regards as the already current role of exotic objects in the communities of these islands. In regard to the latter he states (Lessa 1975b: 254–5):

> The natives already knew about iron because of their close proximity to Halmahera and other islands in the Indies, which obtained it from Chinese and European traders . . . More important, however, than their keen desire for iron could have been their interest in the beads the foreigners gave them. The Palauans already knew about beads, which from ancient times they used for money and valued with a deep and all-pervading passion. Coming entirely from Indonesia and the Philippines – and possibly ultimately from China, India, and the Mediterranean – vitreous and ceramic beads and other forms of ornaments, fashioned from both glass and clay, entered into the economic, social, political, and religious life of the people, and even acquired an extensive body of mythological tradition.

In chapter 6 I will consider these beads in more detail. For the time being it is important to note that the episodes that Western scholars have often perceived as dramatic examples of first and violent contact may often be a misperception of island peoples by alien voyagers new to the area. The islanders already had a strong tradition of encountering other people and in this had expectations and associated rules of behaviour in relation to such meetings. For the most part we can expect that these rules of behaviour were probably contravened by the uninitiated Europeans.

The second Dutch expedition to the Pacific was led by Olivier van Noort, a Rotterdam tavern-keeper. This expedition arrived at Guam in September 1600. In his own account van Noort reports of the Chamorros that 'some had their face eaten by the pox, so much so that they had only a small opening for the mouth' (in Lévesque 1993: 110). This is not direct evidence of smallpox, as 'pox' was used to describe a number of possible ailments; Lévesque believes it to be leprosy, even though he thinks that the Dutch thought syphilis was responsible.

Perhaps then we ought to be little surprised that in 1565 the voyagers on the *San Lucas* met hostility at every encounter with Carolinians, as this may have been at the height of knowledge that these aliens in European ships brought more than iron and beads. After all, up until this time Guam and the Marianas continued to feel the brunt of Spanish presence, and Glynn Barratt (1988a) makes a convincing case for continued Carolinian sailing expeditions to the Marianas with an especial interest in trading for iron. By 1700 the Carolinians had probably stopped communication with the Chamorro. By this time, the indigenous population of the Marianas may have been reduced by as much as 90 per cent through introduced diseases and war against the Spaniards. Barratt (1988a) believes that part of the massive population decline may be due to some Chamorros becoming refugees in the Caroline Islands, in the Woleai area or Ulithi and Fais.

The likelihood is that the reason for population decline due to illness was easily identified. In discussing the immediate post-contact consequences of venereal disease at the time of Cook, Margaret Jolly (1996: 203) states:

> They [Cook's crew] were indeed the authors of the disease, a fact recognized by Hawaiians and Tahitians, and other Islanders ever since, not just in the immediate 'havock' of the first pains and pandemics but in the ensuing effects of infertility, dying and depopulation in subsequent generations. In many oral and written traditions authored by Hawaiians, venereal diseases are portrayed as the 'curse of Cook'.

Back in Micronesia in 1843, centuries after initial contact, the trader Andrew Cheyne recorded how the visit of his ship led to the death of several Yapese, and the illness of many others, from influenza (Morgan 1996).

It also ought to be acknowledged that the ripples in the Pacific seascape caused by Europeans were filtered through Mexico or South-East Asia, depending on the direction of travel. For example, the majority of Spanish expeditions after the 1540s were fitted out and crewed in the western ports of New Spain (Mexico), a Spanish colony torn from but encompassing the indigenous peoples since 1519, or Peru (Lima was founded in 1535), with a similar history. One of these ports, Acapulco, 'came to life in the 1570s and gradually acquired a small, permanent population of Negroes, Mulattoes, Filipinos, and a few Spaniards' (Gerhard 1972: 41). Thus, on the Pacific rim, colonial demands led rapidly to the development of what Ross Gibson (1994) has termed for early colonial Sydney 'ocean settlement', a mix of settler and diasporic communities, numbers of people born of the fusion of diverse ancestry, an entanglement of geographies and experiences realized through a European frame of governance.

Such a fusion is likely to have occurred much earlier in the islands of South-East Asia. With colonies established in the sixteenth century, the Portuguese expeditions emanating from there were joined to an earlier and long-established trade network linking south China through the islands to India, and almost